

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2010

Colonel James Baunchalk
Commander, William Beaumont Army Medical Center
5005 North Piedras Street
El Paso, TX 79920

Dear Colonel Baunchalk:

As members of the Congressional Invisible Wounds Caucus, we are concerned by the recent reports regarding treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) patients at Fort Bliss. As you are well aware, Fort Bliss and William Beaumont Army Medical Center (WBAMC) provide medical services to members of the United States Armed Forces in (or who live in) Southern New Mexico and West Texas.

As you know, TBI, the disruption in brain function caused by a head injury, is a signature wound of our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and thousands of men and women serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) have suffered traumatic brain injuries. Lasting symptoms include cognitive disability, memory loss, headaches, fatigue, sleeplessness, dizziness, emotional disturbance, difficulty with concentration, slurred speech, and impairment of executive function, among others. TBI ultimately can damage personal relationships, limit professional advancement and economic opportunity, and lead to substance abuse and even suicide.

The response of the US government and military to TBI should be unambiguous. We must marshal every resource to treat TBI and the other invisible wounds of war with the same focus we apply to the wounds that are evident to the naked eye. Anything less than the highest quality of care for our service members and veterans is unacceptable.

We are particularly concerned with reports that service men and women who survived combat must now battle government bureaucracy to receive care for their wounds when they return home. The empty Fort Bliss building meant to serve as a treatment center for TBI patients is a powerful symbol of the neglect that our wounded veterans and service members face. As representatives of the Southern New Mexico-West Texas-Fort Bliss region, we are deeply concerned that our government could be failing those to whom we owe the most. These reports must be investigated and receive the full attention of the United States Congress and government.

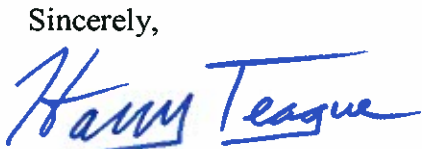
To help us investigate the recent reports about TBI treatment at Fort Bliss, please provide us answers to the following questions by June 21, 2010.

- What measures do you have in place to encourage service members experiencing TBI symptoms to seek care?

- What systems do you have in place to receive complaints from service members about access to or the quality of TBI care while ensuring patient confidence that complaints will not harm a service member's career?
- How many TBI patients are being treated at Fort Bliss, and from which military installations, and how many medical professionals are dedicated to their care on a full time equivalent basis?
- What is the wait time for TBI patients seeking appointments?
- How do Fort Bliss's standard courses of treatment for patients with various levels of TBI severity compare to courses of treatment available outside the military?
- It was reported that resource constraints are the cause of delays in opening Building 805, which is to house the Fort Bliss TBI clinic. What additional funding do you require to offer the highest possible level of treatment to TBI patients at Fort Bliss?
- What other challenges do you face in providing the highest level of care to TBI patients at Fort Bliss and surrounding military installations?

Thank you for your response to our questions. We look forward to working with you to ensure we effectively treat TBI and the other invisible wounds of war and ensure our service members and veterans receive only the highest level of medical care.

Sincerely,



Harry Teague
Member of Congress



Ciro Rodriguez
Member of Congress



Silvestre Reyes
Member of Congress